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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, January 17, 1933.

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Hello Folks: Last Tuesday, I spoke about having a more definite live-at-home program this year, and suggested a good home garden as the basis of a good living at home. In his January Summary of the Agricultural Situation, A. B. Gernung gave you reports from all sections of the live-at-home programs, the drastic economies, and the general trend toward a subsistence type of farming in order to meet 1933 conditions.

With this more definite subsistence idea in mind, I'd like to mention several points in connection with producing a good supply of fruits and vegetables for home use. First, as to seeds and plants with which to start the garden. Let's take potatoes. Potatoes are our most important vegetable crop. Many of you grow a spring or early crop, while others grow both early and late potatoes for home use. Tests made by the State and Department workers have shown that good, sound, healthy seed is the first essential in making a good potato crop. I have repeatedly called your attention to the fact that seed potatoes that are kept at a temperature of about 50 to 60 degrees up to March 15, are better than those stored at lower temperatures. If the air of the storage room can be kept fairly moist, so much the better. If you're buying seed potatoes, I would advise you to get the genuine certified seed. If you have good seed of your own, and cannot afford to buy certified seed, it will pay you to treat the seed for scab and Rhizoctonia before planting. Your county agricultural agent can give you the exact details of how to treat your seed potatoes.

Rotting of seed potatoes in the ground after planting can be largely overcome by cutting the seed about two weeks before planting, and keeping it in barrels or tight bags in a room that is warm, and where the moisture or humidity is very high. The air can be kept moist by hanging burlap bags that have been dipped in water in the room where the potatoes are stored. This causes the cut surfaces to cork or heal over, and they are not nearly so apt to rot when planted. Along the Atlantic Coast, newly planted seed potatoes are often seriously injured by an insect known as the seed-corn maggot. The maggots cut holes or tunnels in the seed pieces after they are planted, and where the cut surfaces are well corked or healed over, the maggots cannot enter them.

What is true of potatoes is also true of other vegetables, you want good seed. You want seeds of good varieties, and you want seeds that will grow. It is a good plan to sow a few of each lot of seed in a box of soil in the house, and make sure that they'll grow. Improvement in the varieties of vegetables has gone on at an amazing rate during the past few years, and it pays to plant at least a few of the newer sorts in order to get a start. If I had some good seeds saved from my crops of last season, I shouldn't hesitate to plant them, but I would endeavor to get a little new stock, especially of the newer varieties.

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Seed peas are a big item in our bill for garden seeds, and I like to plant three or four varieties. I start with Early Alaska then follow with Little Marvel, Gradus, or perhaps Thomas Laxton, and end up with a row or two of the old Telephone variety. When it comes to sweet corn, Golden Bantam, Country Gentleman and Evergreen are my favorites, but you find different varieties of corn being grown for roasting ears in the various parts of the country. The old Black Mexican is one of the sweetest and best. My favorite varieties of tomatoes are Bonny Best, Pritchard, Marglobe, and Break O'Day, the last three were originated here in the Department, and are highly resistant to the tomato wilt disease. I usually plant a quart of onion sets for early spring onions, but my summer crop of onions is grown from seedlings of the Valencia variety that I get from a plant grower in Georgia.

Although this is only the middle of January, I've started work in my garden, and at every opportunity am preparing the land and getting everything in readiness for an early start. About the first of February, I'll begin to sow seeds indoors, and get my hotbed and coldframe in readiness to care for the seedlings just as soon as they are well started. I believe that you folks who live on farms, or have plenty of land should grow at least a part of your supply of fruits and vegetables for home use. This year, I am going right along with you in this live-at-home campaign, and, while I am sure many of you will have much better gardens, I'm going to give you a close race anyway. Next Tuesday, I expect to have Dr. M. B. Waite of the fruit disease section here to discuss fruit diseases, and how to control them. Goodbye until next Tuesday.